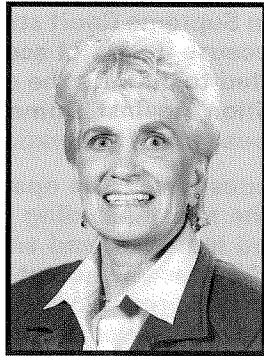


Hammerstrom's

for the people
in the 17th Senate District

Hotline



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CHILDREN MUST RIDE IN THE BACK SEAT The Senate passed legislation last week in an effort to make traveling in Michigan safer for children. I sponsored Senate Bill 882 which requires children ages four and under to be placed in a child safety seat in the rear of all vehicles. Vehicles that do not offer a back seat, such as pick-up trucks, are exempt from this requirement. According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, children ages 12 and under are 36 percent less likely to die in a crash in the back seat than if they were in the front seat. Children who ride in the front seat risk serious injury caused by airbags intended to protect adult passengers. SB 882 also closes a loophole in the state's Motor Vehicle Code that allows nursing mothers to have their child in the front seat with them. Legislators focused their attention on closing this loophole after a woman was charged in Ohio for breast-feeding her baby while driving.

DID YOU KNOW? Motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of accidental death for children under the age of 15 in this state, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning. In 2002, 49 child passengers in the same age group died and 7,232 were injured in traffic crashes in Michigan.

TOUGHER PETITION REQUIREMENTS EXAMINED FOR RECALLS Under a bill receiving consideration from a House committee, persons seeking to recall city, township, or village officials would have to obtain sufficient signatures from all precincts in the affected government. Recall advocates would need petition signatures equaling at least 25 percent of the vote in the last governor's race from each precinct in the local government. Under current law, recall advocates must obtain signatures equaling at least 25 percent of the vote in the last governor's race for the entire city, township, or village. The Local Government and Urban Policy Committee took brief testimony on House Bill 5410, which would implement the 25 percent per precinct requirement, before delaying a vote on the bill until at least next week. It is part of efforts to raise the difficulty of recalling local government officials, who say recall elections are increasingly rampant in the state. Lawmakers are expected to add language to the bill setting a maximum population for a municipality to fall under the 25 percent per precinct requirement.

SENATE APPROVES GRANDPARENT VISITATION BILL Legislation allowing grandparents to seek visitation orders received unanimous support in the Michigan Senate earlier this month. In 2003, the Michigan Supreme Court struck down the state's law allowing grandparents to seek visitation. The law was invalidated because it did not accord sufficient deference to a parent's decision against such visitation. Senate Bill 727 was crafted to address the concerns raised by the justices in their decision. SB 727, supported by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, now goes before the House for consideration.

STATE OPENS ADDITIONAL EMERALD ASH BORER DISPOSAL SITES Two new disposal sites have been opened to assist communities and homeowners impacted by Emerald Ash Borer infestations. The sites, including Mid Michigan Recycling in Ann Arbor, are designed to help ensure proper disposal of infested materials and are in addition to three sites in Southern Michigan which have been operating since April 2003. All sites will accept ash trees and materials such as limbs, logs, and chips, free of charge from municipalities, home and property owners, and private contractors. Other types of wood material will be accepted at the disposal sites; however, a tipping fee may be charged for non-ash. To date, the Emerald Ash Borer has killed or damaged more than six million ash trees in six Southeast counties, including Monroe, and Washtenaw. To control and prevent further spread of the destructive exotic beetle from Asia, the Michigan Department of Agriculture issued a quarantine covering 13 counties, including Jackson, Monroe, and Washtenaw. It is currently illegal to move ash trees, branches, and lumber, ANY TYPE of firewood, and ash wood chips larger than one inch in diameter outside this affected area.

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www.senate.michigan.gov/hammerstrom/news/Hotline.htm.